

520.35693CX1

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Applicants: Y. TERAHAMA, et al

Serial No.: 09/846,615

JUN 08 2001 Filed: May 2, 2001

For: METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR CONNECTING TERMINALS IN A REMOTE CONSULTING SYSTEM

Group: 2152

Examiner: T. Vu

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

Assistant Commissioner for Patents
Washington, D.C. 20231

June 8, 2001

Sir:

Prior to examination, please amend the above-referenced application as follows:

IN THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claim 1 without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter thereof.

Please add new claims 9-19 as follows:

-- 9. A consulting system for replying to an inquiry from a customer, comprising:

a clerk terminal for use by an expert clerk to reply to said inquiry; and

a connection management apparatus for managing connections, said connection management apparatus comprises:

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monitoring means for monitoring connective status of said clerk terminal,

storage means for storing data related to a connectable expert clerk,

extraction means for extracting said data related to said connectable expert clerk, and

sending means for sending said data related to said connectable expert clerk to a terminal for use by said customer.

10. A consulting system according to claim 9, further comprising:

connecting means for connecting said terminal for use by said customer to an unattended agent server;

judging means for judging that said expert clerk to reply to said inquiry has become connectable; and

changing means for changing connection of said terminal for use by said customer, from said unattended agent server to the clerk terminal of said expert clerk that has become connectable, in accordance with the result of the judgment performed by said judging means.

11. A consulting system according to claim 9, further comprising:

an unattended agent server which comprises:

storage means for storing past reply to said inquiry;

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retrieving means for retrieving said past reply corresponding to said inquiry; and

sending means for sending said past reply to said terminal for use by said customer, in accordance with the inquiry from said customer.

12. A consulting system according to claim 9, further comprising:

a terminal for use by said customer.

13. A consulting method for replying to an inquiry from a customer, comprising the steps of:

monitoring connecting status of a clerk for use by an expert clerk to reply to said inquiry;

storing data related to a connectable expert clerk; receiving said inquiry;

extracting said data related to said connectable expert clerk in accordance with said inquiry;

sending said data related to said connectable expert clerk to a terminal for use by said customer; and

sending said reply to said inquiry.

14. A connection management apparatus for managing connections between a first terminal for use by a customer and a second terminal for use by an expert clerk to reply to an inquiry from said customer, comprising:

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

monitoring means for monitoring connective status of said second terminal;

storage means for storing data related to a connectable expert clerk;

extraction means for extracting said data related to said connectable expert clerk, in accordance with the inquiry from said customer; and

sending means for sending said data related to said connectable expert clerk to said first terminal.

15. A connection management apparatus according to claim 14, further comprising:

connecting means for connecting said first terminal to an unattended agent server;

judging means for judging that said expert clerk corresponding to said inquiry has become connectable; and

changing means for changing connection of said first terminal, from said unattended agent server to said second terminal of said expert clerk that has become connectable, in accordance with the result of the judgment performed by said judging means.

16. A connection management apparatus according to claim 14, further comprising:

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means for setting a priority of consultation of said expert clerk in accordance with the frequency of the past consultation of said expert clerk,

wherein said extraction means extracts said data related to said connectable expert clerk, in accordance with said priority.

17. A connection management method for managing connections between a first terminal for use by a customer and a second terminal for use by an expert clerk to reply to an inquiry from said customer, comprising steps of:

monitoring connective status of said second terminal;
storing data related to a connectable expert clerk;
extracting said data related to said connectable expert clerk in accordance with the inquiry from said customer;
and

sending said data related to said connectable expert clerk to said first terminal.

18. A clerk terminal for use by an expert clerk for replying to an inquiry from a customer, comprising:

an input device;
an output device;
a processor; and
a communication device connected through a connection management apparatus to a terminal for use by said customer,

wherein said connection management apparatus comprises:

monitoring means for monitoring connective status of said clerk terminal,

storage means for storing data related to a connectable expert clerk,

extraction means for extracting said data related to said connectable expert clerk in accordance with the inquiry from said customer, and

sending means for sending said data related to said connectable expert clerk to a terminal for use by said customer.

19. A terminal for use by a customer consulting on an inquiry, comprising:

an input device;

an output device;

a processor; and

a communication device connected through a connection management apparatus to a clerk terminal for use by an expert clerk to reply to said inquiry,

wherein said connection management apparatus comprises:

monitoring means for monitoring connective status of said clerk terminal,

storage means for storing data related to a connectable expert clerk,

extraction means for extracting said data related to said connectable expert clerk in accordance with the inquiry from said customer, and

sending means for sending said data related to said connectable expert clerk to a terminal for use by said customer.--

REMARKS

Entry of the above amendments prior to examination is respectfully requested.

Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, or credit any overpayment of fees, to the deposit account of Antonelli, Terry, Stout & Kraus, LLP, Deposit Account No. 01-2135 (520.35693CX1).

Respectfully submitted,

ANTONELLI, TERRY, STOUT & KRAUS, LLP


Carl I. Brundidge
Registration No. 29,621

CIB/jdc
(703) 312-6600